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Chairman: Mr. Toscano (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Switzerland)
later: Mr. Hart (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Barbados)

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(h) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*)

(i) Rendering assistance to poor mountain countries to overcome obstacles in socio-economic and ecological areas (*continued*)

In the absence of Mr. Wali (Nigeria), Mr. Toscano (Switzerland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9.40 a.m.

Agenda item 53: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (*continued*) (A/C.2/60/L.13)

Draft resolution on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

1. **Ms. Mills** (Jamaica) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/60/L.13 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and drew attention to paragraph 14, which requested the Secretary-General to include UN-Habitat in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in recognition of its important role and contribution in the transition from relief to development.

Agenda item 52: Sustainable development (*continued*) (A/60/3, A/60/25, Suppl. No. 25, A/60/25/Add.1, A/60/79, 111,129, 167 and 336)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*) (A/60/115, 158 and 261 and A/C.2/60/L.10)

(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*) (A/60/401)

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (*continued*) (A/60/180)

(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (*continued*) (A/60/171)

(e) Sustainable development in mountain regions (*continued*) (A/60/309)

(f) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 (*continued*) (A/60/82 and 154)

(g) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (*continued*) (A/60/169 and 171)

(h) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/60/171)

(i) Rendering assistance to poor mountain countries to overcome obstacles in socio-economic and ecological areas (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.2/60/L.10

2. **Mr. Mushy** (United Republic of Tanzania) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/60/L.10 on the International Year of Planet Earth, 2008, on behalf of the sponsors, which had been joined by Austria, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Cuba, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Egypt, Grenada, Guatemala, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mauritius, the Philippines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, Viet Nam and Zambia. The objective of the Year was to raise public awareness of the importance of earth sciences in building sustainable communities and to emphasize the importance of science and technology in the follow-up to the agreements reached at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

Resumption of the general debate

3. **Mr. Sevilla Somoza** (Nicaragua), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the Central American Integration System, said that natural disasters were increasingly affecting Central America's sustainable social and economic development and limiting its possibilities of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The size, frequency and complexity of recent disasters has often overwhelmed national capacities to deal with the aftermath; the international community must provide support for local prevention and mitigation efforts, and for the

development of an early warning system and appropriate construction technologies. Natural disasters could halt economic development and inevitably the poorest sectors were affected. They were often followed by outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as malaria and dengue, and flooding could destroy a country's crops, with a severe impact on sources of income and employment.

4. The help of the international community in implementing development policies that reduced the risks associated with natural disasters would contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, by reducing human and material losses and protecting development achievements. Risk reduction and sustainable human development were goals that should be supported simultaneously, because they helped reduce poverty, promote the participation of marginalized groups, and increase gender equality.

5. Central America had established mechanisms to prevent and mitigate the effects of natural disasters. In 1993, a coordination centre had been established to strengthen national risk management capabilities and, in 1999, the members of the Central American Integration System had decided to establish joint mechanisms for risk prevention and disaster mitigation, with the help of the corresponding national and regional institutions. That had led to the preparation of a regional disaster reduction plan, and the Governments of the region had planned their relevant policies, priorities and actions within its framework. The Puebla Panama Plan included a natural disaster prevention and mitigation initiative, which incorporated risk management considerations in projects in all sectors.

6. **Mr. Logan** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that the Federation had initiated a number of projects and programmes that were contributing to the Millennium Development Goals on sustainable development and risk reduction, specifically at the community level. The unprecedented generosity after the Indian Ocean tsunami had given it the rare opportunity to rebuild community infrastructure and maintain programming for longer than usual, rather than merely meeting immediate survival needs. Within the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, IFRC programmes in the areas of health, water, sanitation and hygiene had contributed to improving the health of vulnerable communities around the world. Whenever funding permitted, the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies provided sustainable long-term financial resources, technical assistance and knowledge at the community level.

7. Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in small island developing States supported national development plans that were anchored in disaster preparedness and risk reduction and, at times, had taken a lead role in disaster management training, early warning and pre-positioning of disaster-relief stocks. In the Caribbean and Central America, IFRC hosted a hurricane contingency-planning workshop with all stakeholders every year.

8. As a participant in the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, IFRC viewed risk and vulnerability reduction not as a cost, but as an investment. Disasters were a developmental as well as a humanitarian concern, and concentrating merely on technology could overshadow the key to successful disaster preparedness: the people living in high-risk areas. Community involvement from the bottom up was essential to identify needs and vulnerability patterns and to ensure that warnings were acted upon; information and directives relating to a specific risk needed to flow down from regional and global monitoring systems to civil society networks. To be effective, warning systems needed to be reinforced by trusted partners; Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers were valuable participants in that effort. IFRC contributed to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction through increased preparedness, response activities, small-scale mitigation, education, advocacy and partnerships. Such initiatives should be linked to development plans and take the form of emergency and post-emergency relief.

9. IFRC was concerned about the prospect of an increasing number of climate-related disasters that would principally have an impact on the poor. Several national societies had initiated pilot activities which had demonstrated that local activities could make a practical contribution to eliminate risk reduction. In that optic, IFRC believed that a specific e-strategy on disasters, e-preparedness, had merits.

10. **Mr. Siv** (United States of America), referring to the Commission on Sustainable Development, said the United States applauded the recent decision to reform the Commission's working methods, so as to move

beyond negotiations towards actions, through partnership fairs and capacity-building learning centres. It also applauded the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for recognizing that knowledge management was vital to advancing implementation and for using its unique position to gather, manage and disseminate practical information. The new Commission on Sustainable Development was a prime example of what the United States hoped to see in a reformed and increasingly relevant United Nations.

11. The current cycle focusing on energy for sustainable development would offer a critical opportunity to demonstrate again the added value of the Commission's work by sharing best practices, lessons learned and case studies grounded in the experience of practitioners. Access to energy underpinned so many of the broader development goals adopted in the Millennium Declaration and in Johannesburg, and the cycle would offer a timely opportunity to review progress and promote action. The Commission's fourteenth session should be a model for what the United Nations could be at its best.

12. The United States supported incorporating environmental concerns into development work. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) needed to be strengthened on the basis of the agreed package of measures, which would improve coordination, efficiency and funding. There had been very positive developments over the past year, such as the adoption of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building. The existing system of multilateral environmental agreements reflected a good balance of coordination and decentralization. No further supranational authorities were needed. National Governments had the principal responsibility for environmental governance and measures taken at the national level made the greatest contribution to it.

13. **Ms. Vrcan** (Croatia) said that, with its coastal area containing over 1,000 islands, Croatia was strongly aware of the special environmental and developmental challenges faced by small island developing States and supported the Mauritius Declaration and Strategy.

14. The national inventory report for 1990-2003 and the projections on greenhouse gas emissions for the period up to 2020 had been presented under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Also, a proposal had been submitted that the base year emission level should be increased in order to establish a realistic basis for fulfilling commitments under the Convention and a draft decision had been adopted in May 2005 stipulating that Croatia would be allowed a certain degree of flexibility. Her country fully intended to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and was implementing measures to reduce greenhouse gases.

15. A national committee had been established for observance of the International Year of Mountains in 2002; it had raised awareness of the challenges facing mountain peoples and Croatia was actively participating in regional and international initiatives to determine how best to meet those challenges.

16. The Nature Protection Act had been adopted in May 2005 and a report was being prepared on the situation of nature and nature protection, which would provide a baseline for revising the national strategy. The Global Environment Facility had granted funding for the preparation of the third national report on biodiversity, which should be completed by the spring of 2006. The State Institute for Nature Protection was developing a national list of biodiversity indicators and setting up a national biodiversity monitoring programme to improve nature conservation. The Intergovernmental Conferences "Biodiversity in Europe" were important forums for discussing priority issues and shaping the positions to be taken at the Meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as for promotion of pan-European cooperation and activities for implementing the Convention at the regional level.

17. **Mr. Hian** (Singapore) said that the recent spate of natural disasters, including the Indian Ocean tsunami, showed that the real challenge facing the international community was how to achieve sustainable development. Developed and developing countries must work in close partnership and take specific steps to implement the commitments undertaken at the various United Nations summits and conferences on economic and social issues, including those contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. His delegation welcomed the policy decisions taken by the Commission on Sustainable Development aimed at accelerating implementation in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements. Describing some of Singapore's experiences in overcoming environmental sustainability challenges, he remarked that, not so long ago, his country had suffered from frequent floods and pollution. It had

taken years of careful planning and infrastructural works to alleviate the flood situation and channel as much rainwater as possible into reservoirs. Indeed, it had taken a complete change of mindset to clean up the Singapore River. More than just a matter of necessity, making Singapore clean was a strategy for attracting business and tourists. The link between environmental sustainability, economic growth and social development was a foundation for Singapore's sustainable development.

18. Singapore had successfully diversified its water supply sources and had shared its experience with the Maldives, where salt water had contaminated water supplies following the Indian Ocean tsunami. Energy and the environment were also inextricably linked. Through new energy-efficiency initiatives, Singapore aimed to reduce up to 190,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions by 2012 and help achieve a 25 per cent improvement in carbon intensity between 1990 and 2012.

19. His country shared its experiences with others through the Singapore Cooperation Programme. The new challenge currently facing the world was to go beyond short-term environmental performance and to strive for environmental sustainability. Sustainable development required strong commitment and concerted efforts from international agencies, governments, industries, communities and individuals. Constant changes and challenges in the natural and man-made environment also required a constant updating of environmental and development strategies as well as new ideas to further enhance sustainable development for current and future generations.

20. **Mr. Geruc** (Belarus) said that his country had finalized its acc ion to the Kyoto Protocol in August 2005 and participated in the implementation in central and eastern Europe of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Belarus, which had just become a member of the Commission on Sustainable Development, was committed to sharing the knowledge gained from practical experience with its development partners in line with Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

21. The increase in the number and intensity of natural disasters in recent years underlined the need for collective international action to tackle the problem of climate change, in accordance with the Hyogo Framework for Action. Particular attention must be paid to the establishment of early-warning systems. Belarus believed that sustainable exploitation of forests could enable forestry to make a considerable contribution to the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

22. **Mr. Sauma** (Mexico) said that Mexico attached considerable importance to resolution 13/1 adopted by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its thirteenth session. Indeed, the international community should not drop its guard although the two-year implementation cycle that addressed the issue of water was over. In that regard, the Fourth World Water Forum to be held in Mexico in March 2006 would enable governments, the private sector and civil society organizations to follow up the policy decisions and actions adopted by the Commission at its thirteenth session with respect to financing, capacity-building and transfer of technology to developing countries, institutional governance and monitoring, in relation to access to basic water and sanitation services.

23. Mexico supported strict compliance with the Kyoto Protocol and was prepared to participate in a balanced dialogue among signatories based on the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities. However, it would participate only if developing country commitments were voluntary. It would not accept any type of sanctions regime for lack of compliance and was totally opposed to being included in annex I of the Convention. Any voluntary expansion of the commitment regime should be gradual and based on a process of capacity-building, including calculating and timely monitoring of the emissions of various national industrial sectors.

24. In order to achieve global sustainable development, governments, international organizations, the private sector and the main stakeholders must promote new patterns of sustainable production and consumption. Mexico had mainstreamed the need for such changes in the public school curricula as well as in ministerial policies. It was also important to strengthen international arrangements on the protection of forests in order to reverse the loss of ecosystems and biodiversity. He proposed the establishment, during the sixth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, of a practical and flexible financial mechanism to support the biological diversity of forests. As one of 15 megadiverse countries, Mexico attached considerable importance to the protection of biological diversity.

25. He supported a revamping of environmental governance within the framework of the restructuring of the United Nations in order to give the environment its proper role in the promotion of sustainable development and reiterated the need for comprehensive international cooperation to draw up long-term, development-oriented strategies to address natural disasters. Considerable importance should be given to risk identification and mitigation as well as to preparedness and to protection of the most vulnerable.

26. **Mr. Pang** Kwang Hwok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that environmental degradation was a major obstacle to sustainable development, adversely affecting human health and impeding national and international poverty eradication efforts. It was caused not only by natural factors such as climate change but also by socio-economic factors. Political will and efforts at the national level were crucial to implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and major United Nations conferences, including the Millennium Summit. His Government was therefore focusing on environmental protection and management for sustainable development in the context of national strategies, including waterway and land readjustment and afforestation projects.

27. His country had acceded to the Kyoto Protocol and to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change in April 2005. It was important to pay keen attention to water-resource management and adequate sanitation and to develop effective early-warning systems for preventing natural disaster risks. More international assistance should be provided to developing countries in their efforts to create a sustainable environment. Commitments to provide ODA and transfer technology should be honoured and priority should be given to building capacity in developing countries. United Nations agencies should accelerate their assistance to those countries in close cooperation with multilateral development and financial institutions.

28. **Mr. Omene** (Nigeria), noting that the results of the first two-year cycle of the programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development pointed to the challenges and obstacles that developing countries needed to overcome in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, welcomed the multi-stakeholder approach used during the review and policy sessions of the Commission. However, success would depend on concrete actions at the national level, supported at the global level. The Commission must remain the forum for the consideration of issues related to the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, with a revitalized Economic and Social Council serving as the principal body for coordination, policy review and dialogue on sustainable development. The international community must honour its collective commitments.

29. Referring to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and its special relevance to Africa, he expressed concern about oversubscription to the Global Environment Facility. Indeed, the allocation of $250 million to the focal area of land degradation had been grossly inadequate and should be increased in the fourth replenishment cycle. The Fund should ease the difficulties that developing countries faced in accessing funds for projects. He supported the invitation to United Nations funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions, donor countries and other development agencies to increase their financial and technical assistance to affected countries.

30. Nigeria had embarked on an ambitious project to check and reverse the rate of desert encroachment and ensure the sustainable management of forest resources. At the most recent Summit of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States, the President of Nigeria had promoted the idea, endorsed by the African Union, of establishing a green wall for the Sahara, stretching from Senegal to Djibouti. Combined with the TerrAfrica initiative, which aimed to increase the level of investments in sub-Saharan Africa to about $4 billion, that programme would significantly mitigate the negative effects of desertification in Africa.

31. His delegation was deeply disappointed that the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention had agreed only on a 5 per cent increase in the Convention budget, which would result in a 25 per cent staff reduction. While there was a need to strengthen UNEP to enable it to respond adequately to environmental challenges, the implementation of the International Environmental Governance (IEG) process would contribute in that regard. A wider discussion of the root causes of the weaknesses in environmental governance should be undertaken before seriously entertaining the idea of transforming UNEP into a specialized agency.

32. His Government was pursuing measures to increase the country's energy mix by exploiting its capacity to generate solar, hydro, wind and geothermal energy. The greatest challenge in that regard was to acquire relevant technology that was affordable, efficient and environmentally sound. He welcomed the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and reaffirmed his delegation's faith in the Convention as the best legal instrument available for addressing the crucial issue of climate change. Disaster reduction posed a challenge to all countries, especially developing countries, and the international community needed to build capacities for risk reduction, adaptation, early warning and post-disaster reconstruction. He welcomed the Hyogo Framework for Action and called on the international community to support its implementation in developing countries.

33. **Mr. Singh** (Observer for the World Conservation Union (IUCN)) said that the 2005 World Summit Outcome had missed an opportunity to substantially enhance the international community's understanding of sustainable development issues and catalyse collective action. The majority of the planet's essential ecosystem services continued to be degraded and unsustainably managed, although the Millennium Project report had concluded that those services were essential to attaining the Millennium Development Goals and that their continued degradation significantly impaired the world's ability to achieve them by 2015. Governments, donors and multilateral institutions should mainstream environmental sustainability into poverty reduction strategies and frameworks. IUCN was committed to making biodiversity conservation work more effectively for the poor, including through its Conservation for Poverty Reduction Initiative.

34. He welcomed the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and looked forward to the forthcoming Conference of the Parties in Montreal. Noting that a temperature rise of two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels was the threshold for dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system, he urged the Parties to the Convention and to the Kyoto Protocol to initiate a process in Montreal that would achieve equitable cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in the near future. He further encouraged the Parties to improve their understanding of the links between climate change and biodiversity.

35. He welcomed the focus of the recent Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification on the role of pastoralists, who were responsible for managing a significant proportion of the world's drylands and hailed the increased emphasis on implementation of the Convention, noting that the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, 2006, provided a great opportunity for mobilizing international and domestic resources.

36. With regard to disaster reduction, he noted that a review of the damage caused by the December 2004 tsunami indicated that the natural ecosystems that had remained intact had played a vital role in buffering the force of the waves and protecting human settlements. Mangrove forests, in addition to providing vital coastal defences, were also a cornerstone of the region's economy. Post-tsunami reconstruction provided the best chance of integrating ecosystem restoration into coastal planning and development. IUCN was currently working with a wide range of coastal populations in tsunami-affected countries through a planned $47 million programme to restore and conserve mangrove ecosystems.

37. **Ms. Gunasekera** (Sri Lanka) said that the degradation of ecosystems had a direct impact on poverty creation and the escalation of conflicts. The international legal infrastructure for environmental protection and management could therefore be regarded as an important tool for poverty eradication and conflict prevention.

38. In the December 2004 tsunami, Sri Lanka had experienced a natural disaster, incurring loss of life and property of unprecedented magnitude. In their response, individual Governments, the United Nations and other international organizations and civil society had reached beyond geopolitical barriers to render assistance to Sri Lanka, rekindling new confidence in the power of peoples to act in solidarity for a new and better world.

39. The survival rate after natural disasters depended on the relative wealth of the country affected; current levels of loss were unacceptable when there was so much scientific and technological know-how that could effectively be harnessed to mitigate losses. The tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean, earthquakes in South Asia and the Far East, and hurricanes and mudslides in the Americas had heightened concern over the need for effective and efficient means of

disaster management. She welcomed the establishment of an early warning system for the Indian Ocean and underscored the need for greater priority to be given to global early warning arrangements incorporating regional and subregional systems.

40. Sri Lanka accorded high priority to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals, including target 7 on environmental sustainability. The Government had taken a number of measures to implement its national sustainable development strategy and to strengthen the legislative framework to protect threatened species of flora and fauna, genetic resources and indigenous knowledge. As a country that was particularly rich in biodiversity, Sri Lanka regarded the Convention on Biological Diversity as the key international instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

41. She expressed concern at the increased risk posed to developing countries and small island developing States by climate change. Similarly, she noted that desertification contributed to food insecurity, famine, poverty and political and social tensions, and was thus a serious obstacle to sustainable development. Sri Lanka had taken firm action to honour its commitments to offset the threatening effects of climate change and desertification.

42. There was a need to intensify research and development to support new and renewable sources of energy for sustainable development. Since 1996, when Sri Lanka had established a division on alternative energy within the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Government had undertaken activities on the establishment of fuel wood plantations, use of biogas as transport fuel, industrial heat and electricity generation, and assessments on hydro-electricity and solar and wind energy sources.

43. The international community had not done enough to respond to the destruction of ecosystems, land and soil degradation, loss of forests, fisheries and biodiversity, air and water pollution, and excessive consumption of fresh water. Since those problems were directly linked to an increase in poverty and to a range of social and medical issues, it was of utmost importance to create an enabling international environment for developing countries to obtain financial, institutional and technical assistance to build the required capacity to sustain ecologically friendly development processes that led to poverty eradication.

44. *Mr. Hart (Barbados), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

45. **Mr. Chaimongkol** (Thailand) said that, since success rates in achieving the Millennium Development Goals had varied between countries, his delegation looked beyond the outcomes of the 2005 World Summit to new global initiatives that would assist developing countries in effective environmental management and protection. As a middle-income country, Thailand had played an important role in the global campaign to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and had become an emerging donor, trading partner and provider of foreign direct investment to least developed countries. The concept of global partnership for development had been fully integrated into Thailand's development and foreign policies, both within the context of its relationship with United Nations agencies, and through North-South and South-South cooperation.

46. The current oil price crisis had led to the quest for new and renewable sources of energy. His Government encouraged the promotion of national and international awareness on energy efficiency, and the adoption of an integrated approach to environmental sustainability. Thailand therefore looked forward to the discussions in that regard at the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2006, and reaffirmed his Government's commitment to the full implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

47. Recalling the spate of recent international natural disasters, he drew attention to the importance of disaster preparedness, and welcomed the mechanisms on disaster reduction and early warning systems that had been introduced.

48. In terms of United Nations reform, his delegation continued to support the establishment of regional centres to complement the work of country offices. Sharing technical expertise and mobilizing existing resources among the regional centres should be encouraged, with the necessary information and communication technology support to facilitate their work. Coordination and information sharing between United Nations agencies dealing with development and environmental issues must also be promoted, in order to avoid duplication and waste.

49. He expressed deep appreciation for the international assistance provided through the United Nations agencies and bilateral arrangements after the tsunami disaster. That response showed that the spirit of cooperation within the international community remained strong.

50. **Mr. Savua** (Fiji), speaking on agenda item 52 (b), welcomed the report of the Secretary-General in document A/60/401. Although his delegation appreciated the initiatives put forward in the document, it was also mindful of the effort required to convert the stated intentions into action and of the need for coordination among United Nations entities and major donor organizations. The current situation would ultimately harm the interests of small island developing States. The report of the Secretary-General contained proposals that would further the sustainable development of those States if properly supported by United Nations entities and endowed with the necessary resources.

51. The symbiotic relationship between the Millennium Development Goals and the Mauritius Strategy had to be borne in mind, together with the responsibility of Governments to monitor progress. Fiji had taken full advantage of the presence there of donors, UNDP and other United Nations entities on the ground to pursue the implementation of its projects, including a major project on biofuels. He appealed to the responsible United Nations entities to complete the projects in countries that were not as fortunate as Fiji to have direct representation, and to convey the notion that all countries were treated fairly and that none were to be excluded. National plans and strategies should be written in consultation with Governments, NGOs and civil society, and the aims and objectives of such programmes must be within the stakeholders' capacity to achieve and maintain them.

52. *Mr. Toscano (Switzerland), Vice-Chairman, resumed the Chair.*

53. **Mr. Mansour** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the unpromising progress reports on actual operations indicated that the international community was planning and making decisions faster than it was taking action. He gave a number of examples of disappointing results in the fields of health, environment, energy and development assistance, which illustrated how important it was to strengthen national capacities for monitoring progress on the Millennium Development Goals and expediting the implementation of the national plans and UNDP projects. The national, regional and international initiatives for meeting the targets established under the Millennium Declaration were most welcome, provided that they addressed the root causes of problems and were based on the outcomes of major United Nations summits and conferences. The 2005 World Summit had been another opportunity for furthering commitments and accelerating collective efforts to advance implementation of Agenda 21 and other outcomes, but it had fallen short of meeting the expectations of many countries in the area of development. However, there was still time to reach the agreed goals, under the leadership of the Economic and Social Council and the functional commissions, in particular the Commission on Sustainable Development. Discussions at the fourteenth session of the Commission should focus on energy efficiency, research and development, transfer of advanced technology, and the promotion of new and renewable sources of energy.

54. With reference to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, he said the Hyogo Framework for Action would have a considerable positive impact on coordination and would substantially reduce disaster losses, in terms of lives and of the social, economic and environmental assets of communities. Full implementation and follow-up of the defined actions and adequate resource mobilization would increase the resilience of nations and communities to recover from disasters and limit their adverse consequences.

55. His country had recently acceded to the Kyoto Protocol, joining in the international recognition of the global nature of climate change and of the need for the widest possible cooperation and participation in an effective and appropriate international response. The international community should endeavour to highlight the issue of deserts and land degradation by addressing the root causes of desertification and its adverse impact on development, poverty, deforestation, health, environmental sustainability, agriculture and migration. Listening to the message of people living in drylands, identifying ways of coexisting with deserts instead of merely combating desertification, sharing the traditional knowledge of the peoples of the desert, and promoting the role of civil society were areas to be explored during the celebration of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification in 2006.

56. During the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015, priority should be given to implementing policies agreed at the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, including raising public awareness and integrated management of water resources. The agreed policies on human settlements provided appropriate guidelines for action by all stakeholders, including Member States and regional and international organizations.

57. Mountains, which were fragile ecosystems providing most of the Earth's freshwater supply and repositories of biological and cultural diversity and heritage, should be sustainably developed through conservation, sustainable exploitation of natural resources, coordination among the relevant organizations at the national and international levels, and adequate funding for their protection.

58. **Mr. Ben-Tura** (Israel) said his country had made advances in combating desertification, promoting renewable sources of energy and advancing technology to reduce global disasters. A mostly arid country, Israel had been one of the first to accede to the Convention to Combat Desertification and had been active in the northern Mediterranean desertification clearing house mechanism.

59. Israel had carried out cutting-edge research projects in dryland sustainable development, and its international cooperation agency, MASHAV, was working with other national bodies to provide desertification training and assistance to other countries. Israel would be hosting the international conference to mark the International Year of Deserts and Desertification in 2006.

60. Israel had a strategic plan for sustainable development, including systems for recycling water and sewage effluents, and desalination plants. It was estimated that manufactured water resources, the keystone of sustainable water management for Israel and the region, would account for 55 per cent of water resources by the end of the decade. Although serious water-resource limitations had prevented mass availability to the region, Israel's efforts would be instrumental in increasing the water flow.

61. Regarding renewable sources of energy, in recent years Israel had developed ways of creating alternative energy and had implemented its 2002 decision that at least 2 per cent of electricity would originate from clean energy, increasing by a further 2 per cent every three years, the primary vehicle being the approval of 500-megawatt solar-thermal power plants. The country had also recently signed with Egypt a contract for natural gas — eliminating the need to build a new coal power plant — which would yield 30 to 40 per cent of Israel's total electricity output and was expected to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the short term. In the wake of Israel's signing of the Kyoto Protocol, a number of complementary draft provisions had been issued in 2004 to improve the clean-energy market and the use of photovoltaic cells in particular.

62. With regard to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the country was developing remote-sensing capacities to help identify hazard vulnerability and risk populations and, ultimately, reduce the disaster impact. In collaboration with Columbia University, Ben Gurion University had also designed interferometric radars to monitor dune and sand migration and evaluate the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami and the quality of water in the Red Sea. Together with Israel's rapid deployment of humanitarian aid, all those sources of technology supported aid efforts.

63. **Ms. Holguín** (Colombia) recalled the commitment undertaken at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to ensure more coherent implementation of the three Convention objectives and to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction in the loss of biodiversity and allocate additional financial and technical resources to developing countries. The sustainable use of biological diversity was of paramount importance for her country and for the Latin American region, especially with regard to protection of their natural resources. In that connection, she drew attention to the third meeting of the Ad-Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing, mandated by the Conference of the Parties to develop guidelines and welcomed the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which sought a more balanced approach to the interests of countries importing and exporting genetically modified organisms.

64. The International Disaster Reduction Strategy, should become a pillar of United Nations activities for reducing the severe and ever-growing impact of natural disasters. Disaster reduction must be integrated as a matter of priority into national plans and programmes for sustainable development and poverty alleviation, in

line with the Hyogo Declaration and its Plan of Action. Also, the United Nations system and the international financial institutions had undertaken to implement the Strategy and support the strengthening of national and community disaster-response capacity. To that end, additional donors must be identified and a broader, stable, long-term financing base established, including an allocation from the regular budget of the United Nations.

65. Vulnerability to the effects of climate change and natural disasters must be addressed by the international community as a whole, if only because of their high social and economic costs. Comprehensive people-oriented early warning strategies were also needed in order to alert the risk population in time and improve their response capacity. The report of the Secretary-General echoed the repeated warnings of the Rio Group about the increased intensity of natural disasters and climatic phenomena, which called for an integrated approach. International cooperation was essential to help the developing countries to ensure the transfer of environmentally clean, energy-efficient technologies so as better to protect the environment.

66. **Mr. Nenadović** (Serbia and Montenegro) said that the segment of the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development directed at improving knowledge and strengthening capacities was of particular importance to his country. Training was a vital component of any strategy, for no strategy could be implemented without qualified personnel. Serbia and Montenegro was endeavouring to work out a sustainable development strategy that included the three pillars of economic, social and environmental development. Those efforts had been accompanied by the adoption in the Republic of Serbia of a number of documents on a variety of sustainable development topics, in which due attention had been devoted to land protection and to the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Protection of the Environment, to be adopted shortly.

67. One dimension of the strengthening of the United Nations was the promotion of environmental protection activities. His country fully supported the transformation of UNEP into a more powerful and institutionalized framework for promoting environmental activities.

68. In economic terms, environmental damage in Serbia and Montenegro cost as much as €2 billion annually and required intensified efforts to offset the damage. It was expected that all environmental legislation would have been reconciled with European Union regulations by the end of 2009 and that it would be fully enforced between 2010 and 2014. While the country should have achieved considerable progress on preserving biodiversity by the end of the year, land degradation still posed a serious problem. The ratification process for the Convention to Combat Desertification should be completed in the next few months.

69. The authorities supported the allocation of more resources for the sustainable development of mountain areas. Huge imbalances between those and other areas should be gradually reduced by investment in projects that would emphasize competitive advantages. Efforts should also be made to conserve natural resources while bringing benefits to local populations through sustainable development. In addition, the fact that mountainous areas often transcended State borders made bilateral and regional cooperation essential. By signing the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, his country had clearly demonstrated its commitment to cooperation for the development of mountainous areas. His delegation welcomed the outcome of the Second Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership, held in Cuzco in 2004.

70. Serbia and Montenegro, in coordination with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, had begun preparations for hosting the Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" in 2007. The authorities would appreciate the cooperation of other States, especially those in south-eastern Europe, as well as their suggestions and recommendations for the preparation of the list of issues.

71. **Mr. Sopoaga** (Tuvalu) said that, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/401), the underlying emphasis of the Mauritius International Meeting on Small Island Developing States had been sustained implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. All efforts should focus on translating the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation into concrete action on the ground in order to address those States' vulnerability and for implementation to be country-driven by the States themselves, on the basis of their own national sustainable development strategies.

72. Given the States' limited human and financial resources, regional intergovernmental bodies must effectively support their implementation efforts. In that connection, he thanked the multilateral and bilateral development partners for their support for the launching of the Tuvalu national sustainable development strategy on the occasion of the High-Level Summit and looked forward to the international community's response regarding appropriate partnerships. In view of the isolation and fragmentation of many small island developing States, some without a local United Nations presence, he urged the Organization to strengthen the coordination of its relevant activities and to consider establishing a permanent presence there.

73. Scientific reports — as well as the assessments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change itself — had furnished proof that climate change was due to human pollution of the atmosphere. With the sustainable development of many highly vulnerable countries, including small islands, at stake, the time had come to act. The impact of recent environmental calamities had shown that even the richest and most powerful country in the world was not immune to the devastating effects of climate change.

74. Countries like his own were the victims of the world's short-sighted drive to burn more and more fossil fuels. The upcoming Montreal Climate Conference must take serious decisions on future actions to halt climate change, in which the largest historical producers of greenhouse gases must immediately reduce greenhouse gas emissions. New funds were urgently needed for accelerating the disbursement of renewable energy and existing energy-efficient technologies and could be financed from air fare taxes similar to those imposed to combat terrorism. His delegation proposed for the Committee's consideration the holding of a summit of world leaders; only at that level could States give any meaningful political commitment to climate change.

75. **Ms. Mohamed** (Kenya) said that the 2005 World Summit had reinvigorated the resolve to expedite implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, which would come to nothing unless the challenges of environmental degradation were adequately addressed. Development partners must honour their commitments to reverse a trend in which most developing countries — especially those in sub-Saharan Africa — were unlikely to meet the poverty eradication target by 2015. Multilateral environmental agreements played a crucial role in poverty alleviation and sustainable development, but there was a need for long-term strategies supported by adequate funding and strong mechanisms, and for better coordination among related agreements.

76. The outcome of the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Development of a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management in 2004 and the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification in October 2005 had identified poor management of chemicals and unsustainable land-use practices as the causes of environmental degradation that adversely affected the world's poor, most of whom lived in Africa. Her delegation supported efforts to ensure the success of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, which would raise awareness of the impact of desertification on sustainable livelihoods, and applauded the nomination of Wangari Maathi, Nobel Laureate, as an honorary spokesperson for the event.

77. Her delegation firmly supported the Hyogo Declaration. It welcomed the recently established African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and called on the international community to ensure that it received the requisite resources. Of particular importance to Kenya was the strengthening of water-resource management initiatives, one of which was the African Ministers Council on Water.

78. Given the importance of renewable energies to sustainable development, Kenya welcomed the regulatory and policy frameworks that would support the promotion of public and private investments in such energies and looked forward to a review of the World Solar Programme at the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It was also vital to protect fragile mountain ecosystems, which were important sources of freshwater and biological diversity and popular tourist destinations, and to promote traditional knowledge so as to preserve the environment for posterity. Kenya also supported the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building, adopted in February in Nairobi, and called on the international community to provide adequate financial resources for its effective implementation.

79. Strengthening international environmental governance must involve a wide range of stakeholders with diverse interests; the system should be reformed in an evolutionary manner without making immediate demands of the United Nations system or Member States. Kenya endorsed the ongoing process of international environmental governance within the framework of the Cartagena Decision, and thought that UNEP should be strengthened within its current mandate from an enhanced financial and scientific base.

80. In the interests of sustainable development, Kenya had taken legislative and policy measures on environmental management, biodiversity, early warning systems, drought preparedness and monitoring, climate change and the ozone layer. In conclusion, she invited delegations to attend the Eighth Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species shortly to be held in Nairobi.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.